

# MANAGING YOUR ACQUISITION CAREER

The Army Acquisition Corps' vision, "A Corps of Leaders Willing to Serve Where Needed and Committed to Providing Soldiers the Systems Critical to Decisive Victory Now and in the Future through Development, Integration, Acquisition, Fielding, and Sustainment," continues to be as relevant today as it was 15 years ago. It is a cost-benefit equation. A well-educated, well-trained Army Acquisition and Technology Workforce (A&TWF) is crucial to supporting the Army's current transformation, as well as to sustaining and recapitalizing current weapon systems critical to supporting "Soldiers on Point for the Nation...Persuasive in Peace, Invincible in War."

This is the third issue of *Army AL&T* magazine devoted to acquisition career management. The articles in the first issue (then *Army RD&A*, July-August 1996) focused on initial efforts to revitalize the civilian component of the Army Acquisition Corps and the acquisition workforce. Those early initiatives resulted in what are now well-established policies, programs, and opportunities. A regional support structure, comprising regional directors, acquisition career management advocates, and acquisition career managers, is now in place throughout the country and provides a vital communications network for the entire workforce. Several opportunities are available to ensure the A&TWF is ready for current challenges and poised for the future, including the Acquisition Tuition Assistance Program, Career Development Group Program, and advanced education and training programs. I encourage you to refer to this issue of *Army AL&T* magazine to learn more about managing your acquisition career.

You are the best manager and advocate for your career. Thus, it is important for you to devote the time and effort required to understand what needs to be done to meet your definition of success. Yes, I did say "your definition of success." Each of us has our own personal and professional goals. Your goals drive what we, the Acquisition Career Management Office (ACMO), need to accomplish in terms of providing the "what, where, when, and how" of professional development. Additionally, your supervisors and mentors are available to provide you advice and counseling along the way. In fact, they are the key to merging your career objectives with the mission needs of your organization and those of the Army.

The ACMO is here to help. Indeed, we have put tools in place to assist each of you in implementing, executing, and maintaining your own 5-year individual development plan (IDP). IDPs address a civilian workforce member's education, training, and experience goals while officer record briefs (ORBs) are used for this purpose by Army acquisition officers. The IDP is a critical planning document. It is also a means to track your career goals and objectives.



I also want to note that new minimum education requirements for personnel in the contracting career field were mandated when Section 808 of the *Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for FY01* amended 10 U.S.C. §1724, *Contracting positions: qualification requirements*. Section 808 pertains to all new GS-1102 series civilian DOD employees and military personnel

in similar occupational specialties and requires that an individual have a baccalaureate degree. Each individual should strive to be competitive, strive to advance, and realize the importance of broadening their perspectives and the necessity of understanding each of the acquisition career fields.

It is also important to note that supervisors can foster an environment that encourages and accommodates career development and the ability, as the saying goes, "to think outside the box." Supervisors must recognize this and translate it into vigorous support of a versatile, lethal, and sustainable Army. Such support means training, and training may mean that supervisors have to do without employees for short periods. When faced with the decision to let someone train or not, supervisors should take the long view, understanding that a well-trained workforce will shine not only on itself, but on the organization as a whole. We are accustomed to seeing military officers in the acquisition workforce leave for classes while being assigned a 3-year tour. This is accepted practice in the military. It should also apply to civilians in the A&TWF. Again, what may be lost in temporary productivity will be gained in long-term efficiency. Supervisors also have the unique responsibility and privilege of growing successors, providing opportunities to their employees to demonstrate leadership potential, and building strong team players for the future.

I encourage you to strive to be competitive and to advance your own career through appropriate training and experiential opportunities. The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) is in place to ensure the overall effectiveness and professionalism of military and civilian personnel in the A&TWF. With the implementation of DAWIA and the tightening of regulations and policies concerning training, it is even more critical to emphasize the importance of training the workforce. It is a cost-benefit equation that encompasses the merging of training and certification to achieve qualifications for critical jobs. A well-educated, well-trained Acquisition and Technology Workforce is crucial to ensure the success of the Army's transformation and its continued designation as the world's most dominant fighting force. Performance counts—yours and ours!

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